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Quantico, Virginia 22134-5068*

MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES

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**The Army's Contingency Force  
(The 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division)**

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT  
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF  
MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES

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AY 07-08

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Date: 12 May 2008

<b>Report Documentation Page</b>			Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188		
<p>Public reporting burden for the collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington VA 22202-4302. Respondents should be aware that notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person shall be subject to a penalty for failing to comply with a collection of information if it does not display a currently valid OMB control number.</p>					
1. REPORT DATE <b>2008</b>	2. REPORT TYPE	3. DATES COVERED <b>00-00-2008 to 00-00-2008</b>			
<b>4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE</b> <b>The Army's Contingency Force (The 82nd Airborne Division)</b>			5a. CONTRACT NUMBER		
			5b. GRANT NUMBER		
			5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER		
<b>6. AUTHOR(S)</b>			5d. PROJECT NUMBER		
			5e. TASK NUMBER		
			5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER		
<b>7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)</b> <b>United States Marine Corps,Command and Staff College, Marine Corps Combat Development Command,Marine Corps University 2076 South Street,Quantico,VA,22134-5068</b>			8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER		
<b>9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)</b>			10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)		
			11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)		
<b>12. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY STATEMENT</b> <b>Approved for public release; distribution unlimited</b>					
<b>13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES</b>					
<b>14. ABSTRACT</b>					
<b>15. SUBJECT TERMS</b>					
<b>16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:</b>			<b>17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT</b> <b>Same as Report (SAR)</b>	<b>18. NUMBER OF PAGES</b> <b>33</b>	<b>19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON</b>
a. REPORT <b>unclassified</b>	b. ABSTRACT <b>unclassified</b>	c. THIS PAGE <b>unclassified</b>			

## **Executive Summary**

**Title:** The Army's Contingency Force (The 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division)

**Author:** Major Ronald E. Lofton Jr. United States Army

**Thesis:** The war in Iraq and Afghanistan is hindering the strategic capabilities of the United States militaries contingency forces. (A case study of the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division)

**Discussion:** The United States is faced with a world with extremely complex issues. The fall of the former Soviet Union eliminated a super power in which the U.S. could focus much of its resources and attention. Since the fall of the Soviet Union several crisis have emerged which include; nuclear proliferation, the rise of non-state actors, illicit activities which fund terrorist organizations and the fight for limited natural resources in weak and failing states. The United States as the premiere world power must be prepared to respond to events or actions which may threaten its national interest. The war in Iraq and Afghanistan has significantly consumed the armed forces of the United States. The National Security Strategy as well as the National Defense Strategy emphasizes the importance of being prepared to respond to contingency crisis. The 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division has been designated throughout history as one of the military instruments designed to respond to crisis situations. This ability is hindered when the entire division is deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan simultaneously during 2007 and a portion of 2008. The United States cannot take the risks of deploying its contingency forces for enduring requirements and expect to be prepared for future contingencies.

**Conclusion:** The data collected in this paper displays the overwhelmingly positive argument that the war in Iraq and Afghanistan is hindering the strategic capabilities of the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne division to be utilized for strategic contingency operations.

DISCLAIMER

THE OPINIONS AND CONCLUSIONS EXPRESSED HEREIN ARE THOSE OF THE INDIVIDUAL STUDENT AUTHOR AND DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT THE VIEWS OF EITHER THE MARINE CORPS COMMAND AND STAFF COLLEGE OR ANY OTHER GOVERMENTAL AGENCY. REFERENCE TO THIS STUDY SHOULD INCLUDE THE FOREGOING STATEMENT.

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## Preface

As an Air Defense Artillery officer I have had the distinct privilege and honor to serve in two of the most historic divisions in the Army. I served in the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division during my years as a Lieutenant and the 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry Division as a captain. Serving in these divisions provided me with a broad perspective on the preparations of different units in the Army to fight and win on the battlefield. When I reflect upon my years in the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne division, I remember the adrenaline that rushed through my veins as I led my men jumping out of aircraft prepared to defeat what ever threat opposed the United States. The 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry developed my appreciation for mechanized infantry and the training and preparation for winning the conventional war. My previous assignment was at the Army's Human Resources Command where I witnessed the continuous deployment of the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne from 2005 through 2008. It was during my time at HRC where I developed my concern for the loss of the strategic contingency capabilities of the United States that were hindered with the enduring deployment of the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division.

I am extremely honored to have had the opportunity to attend the Marine Command and Staff College here in Quantico, Virginia. The faculty and staff are first class. I want to personally thank my mentor Dr. Swanson for his patience and diligence as he guided me throughout this process. I want to acknowledge my faculty advisor COL Curtis Anderson for always giving me a source of inspiration on a daily basis. Finally I want to acknowledge my God and family for giving me the strength, love and patience to serve proudly in the armed forces of the United States. Their prayers and support are immeasurable.

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## CURRENT STATE OF AFFAIRS

The United States faces in 2008 a world with complex tasks and issues. Illicit activities, rogue states that are proliferating nuclear weapons are just a few of the current issues that face the United States. South American drug trafficking continues to plague the U.S. and remains a conduit for possible security threats to the U.S. The continent of Africa remains a region that is characterized by constant wars, famine, and disease. The threat of weapons of mass destruction in the hands of terrorists is a serious threat to the U.S. and other nation states around the globe. The unlimited threats that continue to persist are clear indicators that our military resources must be prepared to respond to potential crisis or contingencies.

The invasion of Iraq and Afghanistan has placed a significant strain on the uniformed services of the United States. Chairman of the Joint Chief of Staff Admiral Michael Mullins stated in a recent testimony before the Senate Armed Service Committee in February, "The well is deep, but it is not infinite. We must examine the long-term risks the United States faces to its security commitments around the world and address the toll that ongoing combat operations are taking on military forces, gear and families."<sup>1</sup> The true intentions of North Korea/China/Iran/and select corrupt governments in South America are of important United States interest as well. The United States needs to maintain forces that are prepared to respond to potential U.S national security threats around the globe.

The U.S. Army's 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division has been used as a strategic rapid deployment force over the last 20 years. In 2007 this entire unit was deployed for 15 months in Iraq and Afghanistan. This paper will argue that the war in Iraq and

Afghanistan is hindering the strategic capabilities of the United States militaries contingency forces. The unit that will be examined in this paper is the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division given the units role in United States history as the Army's premiere and only parachute airborne contingency force.

The National Security and Defense Strategy and what is defined in these documents as threats and our ability to counter threats will provide a foundation for the thesis. Joint Publication definitions of contingency forces and the missions they are matched against will provide additional insight into the role of contingency forces. The paper will also examine the history of the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne and how the unit was utilized throughout history as well as the deployment of the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division for operations in Grenada, Panama, and Haiti. Appendix 1 of the paper chronicles the deployment of the division since 2001.

## NATIONAL SECURITY STRATEGY

The March 2006 National Security Strategy articulates the president's vision of how the United States will promote democracy while at the same time defend its national interest at home as well as abroad. There is a strong emphasis in this document on fighting the War on Terrorism. As military forces are engaged in this fight, the strategy also speaks to other means of combating enemy state and non-state actors that threaten the United States vital interest. The use of interagency as well as diplomatic means is extremely crucial and is spelled out in the strategy. What is also evident throughout the strategy is a need to be prepared to combat other rogue states that may not necessarily be involved in fighting the United States and her coalition forces in Iraq and Afghanistan.

President George W. Bush states this in the opening letter, "We fight our enemies abroad instead of waiting for them to arrive in our country. We seek to shape the world, not merely be shaped by it; to influence events for the better instead of being at their mercy."<sup>2</sup> A point of emphasis is that the president clearly states that the United States must be ready to project force abroad in order to shape events and not be shaped by them. The current fight is a counter insurgency in Afghanistan and Iraq, the country's national security interest can still be threatened at almost anytime. With the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne fully committed to support this fight, this prohibits this unit's ability to respond to any requirements that justify immediate action.

The Security Strategy speaks to the tyrannies that exist around the world and the possible 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> order effects this may have on the United States and her allies.

Tyranny is the combination of brutality, poverty, instability, corruption, and suffering, forged under the rule of despots and despotic systems. People living in nations such as the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), Iran, Syria, Cuba, Belarus, Burma, and Zimbabwe know firsthand the meaning of tyranny; it is the bleak reality they endure everyday. And the nations they border know the

consequences of tyranny as well, for the misrule of tyrants at home leads to instability abroad. All tyrannies threaten the world's interest in freedom's expansion, and some tyrannies, in their pursuit of WMD or sponsorship of terrorism, threaten our immediate security interest as well.<sup>3</sup>

The National Security Strategy also speaks to the impending terror attacks and attacks that have occurred around the world. One must argue that the U.S. Armed Forces must be prepared to respond to more catastrophic attacks in order to demonstrate to the world that we can prevent or respond in a timely manner.

**While the United States Government and its allies have thwarted many attacks, we have not been able to stop them all. The terrorist have struck in many places, including Afghanistan, Egypt, Indonesia, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Morocco, Pakistan, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Spain, and the United Kingdom. And they continue to seek WMD in order to inflict even more catastrophic attacks on us and our friends and allies. Some states, such as Syria and Iran, continue to harbor terrorist at home and sponsor terrorist activity abroad.<sup>4</sup>**

This exert from the strategy clearly articulates that threats continue to persist from different locations around the world. The United States cannot afford to have a majority of its military assets fixed in Iraq and Afghanistan. A need to maintain specified contingency forces with an ability to respond within 24 hours to an unspecified location is vital.

The Security Strategy also speaks to illicit activity that the United States must be prepared to respond to.

**In Darfur, the people of an impoverished region are the victims of genocide arising from a civil war that pits a murderous militia, backed by the Sudanese Government, against a collection of rebel groups. In Colombia, a democratic ally is fighting the persistent assaults of Marxist terrorist and drug traffickers. In Venezuela, a demagogue awash in oil money is undermining democracy and seeking to destabilize the region. In Cuba, an anti-American dictator continues to oppress his people and seeks to subvert freedom in the region. In Uganda, a barbaric rebel cult—the Lord's Resistance Army is exploiting a regional conflict and terrorizing a vulnerable population. In Ethiopia and Eritrea, a festering border dispute threatens to erupt yet again into open war. In Nepal, a vicious Maoist insurgency continues to terrorize the population while the government retreats from democracy.<sup>5</sup>**

Once again the National Security Strategy identifies issues that are potential conflicts or crisis that the United States must be prepared to intervene in.

The National Security Strategy also speaks to conflict intervention and the United States need to support operations to restore peace around the world, "Some conflicts pose such a grave threat to our broader interests and values that conflict intervention may be needed to restore peace and stability. Recent experiences has underscored that the international community does not have enough high-quality military forces trained and capable of performing these peace operations"<sup>6</sup>

The National Security Strategy in the closing pages speaks to the serious challenges that remain to the U.S.

**Iran has violated its Non-Proliferation Treaty safeguards obligations and refuses to provide objective guarantees that its nuclear program is solely for peaceful purposes. The DPRK continues to destabilize its region and defy the international community, now boasting a small nuclear arsenal and an illicit nuclear program in violation of its international obligations. Terrorists, including those associated with the al-Qaida network, continue to pursue WMD. Some of the world's supply of weapons-grade fissile material – the necessary ingredient for making nuclear weapons—is not properly protected. Advances in biotechnology provide greater opportunities for state and no-state actors to obtain dangerous pathogens and equipment.**<sup>7</sup>

## NATIONAL DEFENSE STRATEGY

The National Defense Strategy examines the themes from the National Security Strategy and prescribes in more detail an active approach to protecting the United States.

The National Defense Strategy outlines an active, layered approach to the defense of the nation and its interest. The National Defense Strategy gets specific about the inherent need to be able to project a force to protect the interest of this nation. This is specifically stated in the section titled, "How we accomplish our objectives, deter aggression and counter coercion. We will deter by maintaining capable and rapidly deployable military forces and, when necessary, demonstrating the will to resolve conflicts decisively on favorable terms."<sup>8</sup>

The National Defense Strategy also discusses the ability to deny enemies sanctuaries and the United States ability to use specialized military forces to facilitate this capability. "A key goal is developing the capability to surge military forces rapidly from strategic distances to deny adversaries sanctuary. In some cases, this will involve discrete Special Operations Forces (SOF) or precision attacks on targets deep inside enemy territory. To deny sanctuary requires a number of capabilities, including: persistent surveillance and precision; and operational maneuver from strategic distances."<sup>9</sup>

The National Security Strategy and National Defense Strategy clearly address the myriad of global threats that exist and threaten interest of the U.S. In the modern battlespace as spelled out in both strategies, it is paramount that the United States be prepared to not only fight a war on one front, but also have contingency forces available to project power to thwart other potential conflicts that were clearly articulated in the previous pages.

The National Defense Strategy however in the last pages contradicts this and should be of great concern to U.S. political and military senior leaders,

**Conduct lesser contingencies** Our global interests require our armed forces to undertake a limited number of lesser contingency operations, perhaps for extended periods of time. Lesser contingencies include smaller scale combat operations such as strikes and raids; peace operations; humanitarian missions; and non-combatant evacuations. Because these contingencies place burdens on the same types of forces needed for more demanding military campaigns, the Department closely monitors the degree and nature of involvement in lesser contingencies to properly balance force management and operational risks.<sup>10</sup>

This statement provides an escape clause to involve forces in both contingency and enduring requirements. This is clearly a situation that is complex with a limited force pool with which to select from.

## CONTINGENCY OPERATIONS

As articulated in the National Security Strategy and the National Defense Strategy, the United States continues to face threats to its interest and the interest of its allies. The Untied States as the world's premiere superpower must keep its eye on all potential crisis throughout the world. Operations in Iraq and Afghanistan have clearly taken up extensive military manpower and resources. The vitality of maintaining units that specialize in projecting combat power abroad has never been more critical than today.

Joint Publication 3.0 defines contingency operations as the following

**Contingency:** A situation requiring military operations in response to natural disasters, terrorists, subversives, or as otherwise directed by appropriate authority to protect US interests. **Contingency Operation:** A military operation that is either designated by the Secretary of Defense as a contingency operation or becomes a contingency operation as a matter of law. It is a unit that; a. is designated by the Secretary of Defense as an operation in which members of the Armed Forces are or may become involved in military actions, operations, or hostilities against an enemy of the United States or against an opposing force.<sup>11</sup>

The definition that is stated is nested with concerns that are clearly pointed out in the National Security Strategy. Specifically concerns such as terrorism/crisis and elements that threaten the interests of the United States.

The need to maintain forces on standby for potential crisis that persist is paramount. To suggest the United States does not have units prepared to deploy in support of a crisis would be flawed. The concern that is addressed in this paper is that specified units with rapid reaction capabilities are currently deployed for enduring requirements. A Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU) at sea will always be maintained as well as other contingency operating forces such as the Army's special operating forces (Rangers/Seals/Special Operating Forces). The 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division in 2007 had all of its brigades deployed at the same time in both Iraq and Afghanistan. This was a major

risk considering the fact that the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne is the only airborne division in the United States Military. Specifically the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne division unlike the 101<sup>st</sup> Air Assault Division is the only U.S. Army division trained and equipped for parachute insertion from Air Force cargo aircraft (C-130/C-141/C-17/C-5). Pope Air Force Base is collocated with the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division on Fort Bragg and provides a significant strategic lift capability to transport the division.

Joint Pub 3.0 further discussed the vital importance of having capable contingency forces available for crisis response,

**Deploying a credible force rapidly is one step in deterring or blocking aggression. However, deployment alone will not guarantee success. Achieving successful deterrence involves convincing the adversary that the deployed force is able to conduct decisive operations and the national leadership is willing to employ that force and to deploy more forces if necessary.<sup>12</sup>**

The purpose of maintaining contingency forces is to keep U.S. adversaries honest and to pursue a “conflict prevention” strategy. “Conflict prevention consists of diplomatic and other actions taken in advance of a predictable crisis to prevent or limit violence, deter parties, and reach an agreement before armed hostilities.”<sup>13</sup> The ability to project forces in support of humanitarian crises has been of major importance as the United States projects its democracy and goodwill toward mankind around the world. The United States Marine Corps has led the charge in this effort with operations like Operation Provide Relief and Restore Hope. The United States still needs to maintain a division level force that is able to conduct strikes and raids in a very quick and decisive manner.

The 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne is capable of forcible entry parachute assault operations which initiate with takeoff via transport aircraft anywhere in the world within 18 hours. This capability distinguishes itself from a MEU which relies on the transport and speed of

ships to deliver this capability. When the element of speed and surprise are necessary the ability of an airborne unit to project itself globally to respond to any crisis is vital in a world with pending crisis and contingencies. This unique capability the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne can deliver.

Joint Pub 3.0 defines a strike as,

Attacks conducted to damage or destroy an objective or a capability. Strikes may be used to punish offending nations or groups, uphold international law, or prevent those nations or groups from launching their own attacks. Raids are operations to temporarily seize an area, usually through forcible entry, in order to secure information, confuse an adversary, capture personnel or equipment, or destroy an objective or capability.<sup>14</sup>

It is important to note that Joint Pub 3.0's definition of strike defines a type of mission that contingency force may have to respond to defeat or deter the threats that are emphasized in the National Security and Defense Strategy. The 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne as well as MEUs and Army Ranger Battalions are capable of providing this capability.

The ability for the United States to maintain operations in Iraq and Afghanistan while simultaneously focus on the impending threats and crisis around the world is daunting to say the least. At a minimum the ability to maintain forces that have strategic rapid deployment capabilities should be a paramount responsibility. If this was not the case then the National Security Strategy as well as the National Defense Strategy would not stress its importance. To truly appreciate the unique nature of the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne division, a careful examination of the units history is necessary. The unique mission and the manner in which the 82<sup>nd</sup> has deployed to preserve the national interest of the United States is of significant importance to strengthen the argument to maintain it as a contingency force.

## **HISTORY AND CAPABILITIES OF THE 82<sup>ND</sup> AIRBORNE DIVISION**

Prior to Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division was the most combat ready rapid reaction force in the Army. A lethal threat at the nation's disposal.

The mission of the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division is to be able to deploy anywhere in the world with little or no prior notice, going immediately into combat upon arrival, and winning! Twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, fifty two weeks a year, a contingent of the All Americans remains on alert ready to begin deployment into battle.<sup>15</sup>

The 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division was formed on 25 August 1917 as part of the massive growth of the US Army towards a goal of one million troops in France by May 1918. The division received the nickname All Americans from its recruitment of soldiers from all over the United States. The unit was deployed to France and was a major part of operations during World War I. The unit saw action in the Lagny Sector and St. Mihiel. One of the more famous battles the 82<sup>nd</sup> fought took place during the Meuse-Argonne Offensive, "After only one and a half hour's notice, the men of the 327<sup>th</sup> made a forced march to move into the line and then held their ground against stiff German pressure for two days until relieved by the U.S. 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry Division. Back on the offensive on 7 October, the division's 164<sup>th</sup> Brigade launched an attack against the Germans, seizing Hills 180 and 223 against tenacious resistance."<sup>16</sup> Sergeant Alvin York a very important 82<sup>nd</sup> Soldier in the division's history, would receive the Medal of Honor for his efforts on Hill 223. Sergeant York killed 25 Germans during an ambush and was able to capture 132 more. The proud tradition of the 82<sup>nd</sup> began in World War I but continued through to World War II and beyond.

The 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne was deactivated for more than two decades and would not return to action until World War II. It was during World War II that the All American Division would achieve its airborne strategic and tactical capabilities.

**Reactivated on 25 March 1942 at Camp Claiborne, Louisiana, under Brig Gen Omar Bradley, the 82<sup>nd</sup> was initially trained as a standard infantry division under a training cadre drawn from the 9<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division. On 15 August 1942, the 82<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Division became the first of a new type of division- airborne! Designated the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division, the new 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne was ready to create a legend that has continued to grow for almost half a century.<sup>17</sup>**

The 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne's vertical envelopment capabilities were utilized extensively throughout the European Campaign during World War II. Operation Husky; the invasion of Normandy; and Operation Market Garden; were selected operations where the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne conducted air insertion operations. Operation Husky which was a plan to attack the Axis Powers in Sicily to force them to reinforce troops thus taking away Axis Soldiers from the Western front was one the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Divisions first assaults. The British were to take the southeastern part of Sicily while the 82<sup>nd</sup> would drop at points in the west near Gela. COL Jim Gavin led the airborne assault for the 505<sup>th</sup> while the 504<sup>th</sup> Parachute Infantry Regiment was led by COL Tucker. The tactic of surprise was a key element of the night assault.

The Germans on the island were surprised and led a swift counter attack. Despite being dropped 20 miles from their objectives and several casualties from naval friendly fire, the 82<sup>nd</sup> was able to secure its objectives, "Objective X (Niscemi) was eventually taken by men of the 3/504<sup>th</sup> and objective Y was neutralized by Captain Sayre's A Company of the 505<sup>th".<sup>18</sup></sup>

The success of the airborne operations received laudatory comments from German General Karl Student who was the leader of the Nazi jump on Crete,

The Allied Airborne operation in Sicily was decisive despite widely scattered drops which must be expected in a night landing. It is my opinion that if it had not been for the Allied Airborne forces (82<sup>nd</sup>) blocking the Herman Goering Armored Division from reaching the beachhead, that Division would have driven the initial seaborne forces back into the sea. I attribute the entire success of the Allied Sicilian Operation to the delaying of German Reserves by the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division until sufficient forces had been landed by sea to resist the counterattacks by our defending forces.<sup>19</sup>

The mission of the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division for the Allies invasion of Normandy on June 6, 1944 was to capture and control the strategic town of Ste. Mere Eglise, control the bridge crossing over the Merderet River, and secure the exit routes from the beach area to facilitate the rapid advance of the seaborne troops. The paratroopers were to encounter many obstacles the Germans used in their defenses which included flooding fields and erecting 10 foot stakes that hindered landings by gliders from the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne. "In spite of the landing mix-ups the resourceful men of the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division managed to accomplish many of the Division's objectives. The strategically important town of Ste. Mere Eglise was captured by dawn by the 505<sup>th</sup>'s 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion."<sup>20</sup> The 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne would continue to make its mark during World War II in later campaigns.

Operation Market Garden was an attempt for the Allies to exploit the success of the invasion of Normandy with a thrust into the Rhine through Holland to Germany. Market was the Airborne part of the operation and Garden consisted of the ground offensive. The 101<sup>st</sup> /82<sup>nd</sup>/ and British 1<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division along with a Polish Airborne Brigade were responsible for securing key bridges to allow the British 30 Corps access into the Rhine Valley. The 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne's responsibility were the bridges at Nijmegan while the 101s was to secure Eindhoven and the 1<sup>st</sup> British Airborne the famous bridge to far at Arnhem. The airborne operation did achieve tactical surprise. The bridges at Eindhoven and Nijmegan were eventually captured after much sacrifice. The 30<sup>th</sup> Corps

halted at Nijmegan and the British forces at Arnhem were never relieved, "With the bridge in possession of the Allies, the paratroopers of the 82<sup>nd</sup> expected to see British armor rolling across to relieve the British paratroopers clinging to hope in Arnhem."<sup>21</sup> The 82<sup>nd</sup> would go on to fight bravely at Ardennes and was an integral success of the Allied forces in Europe. The 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne established a credible reputation as an elite fighting force during World War I and World War II. The unit would see a new role as a strategic reserve after World War II.

The 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne post World War II was one of the Army units that was spared after a severe reduction of troops. This was also the period the unit officially became a part of the strategic reserve, "The revised Army doctrine designated the 'All American' Division as a strategic reserve. The division was to be in a high state of readiness to meet any challenge, anywhere, anytime."<sup>22</sup> During the Korean Conflict the 82<sup>nd</sup> remained at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, its home base. Because of the division's role as strategic reserve, the 82<sup>nd</sup> was not deployed to Korea. The division was deployed as contingency force in operation Power Pack in 1965 to restore peace in the Dominican Republic. Within hours thirty three cargo planes landed with Soldiers from the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne. Once on the ground the Soldiers had to fight across the Duarte Bridge to move onto Santo Domingo. The 82<sup>nd</sup> received casualties for the first time since action in World War II.

The last enduring requirement the division participated in prior to the War on Terror was during the Vietnam conflict. The Tet offensive of January 1968 caused alarm around the world. Within 24 hours the 3<sup>rd</sup> Brigade of the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne was alerted and sent to Vietnam. Once acclimated to the environment, the brigade was given the mission of blocking any enemy attempt from the south aimed at retaking the ancient Vietnamese

capital of Hue. The Brigade eventually came under the control of the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division. "On May 1, the Department of the Army announced that the 82<sup>nd</sup> members would become a permanent unit under the control of Headquarters, U.S. Army, Republic of Vietnam."<sup>23</sup> The unit finally returned after 22 months of service with the loss of 212 soldiers during the deployment. Upon completion their enduring requirement in Vietnam, the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne would see action as a strategic contingency force for future operations in Grenada, Panama, and Haiti.

### OPERATION URGENT FURY GRENADA

The United States was involved in a Cold War with the Soviet Union from mid 1940s until the fall of the Soviet Union in early 1990s. The Soviet Union wanted to spread communist theology to counter the democratic influence of the United States around the world. The latter part of the 70s and most of the 80s made the Caribbean a geopolitical hotspot where the Soviet Union was closely dealing with its ally Cuba. The Soviet Union would rely on Cuba to influence new regimes in the Caribbean by forming alliances to maintain an advantage over U.S. influence in the Caribbean. In October 1983, Maurice Bishop, the leader of Grenada was deposed and executed by radical colleagues. The radicals began to align themselves with Cuba. These events clearly alarmed the neighboring islands and they feared the same fate was in store for them as well.

President Ronald Reagan was aware of the situation. He was known for having a tough stance against Soviet Union expansion especially in the Western hemisphere and never hesitated to threaten the use of military force to deter Soviet aggression. Seeing an opportunity to protect United States interest and deter Soviet aggression, President Reagan launched Operation Urgent Fury "President Reagan gave three reasons for his decision to overthrow the radical regime in Grenada: 1. to protect the safety of up to 1,000 Americans, 2. to forestall further chaos, and 3. to assist in the restoration of conditions of law and order and of governmental institutions."<sup>24</sup>

Operation Urgent Fury was a combined arms effort which touched across all branches of service which included Marines and Navy SEALS. The elements were joined by 750 members of the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division who arrived within 18 hours of

notification from Fort Bragg, North Carolina. The operation was the first time the United States committed regular forces in full support of a contingency operation since the beginning of the Vietnam War. The 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne was a key element in this contingency operation.

## OPERATION JUST CAUSE PANAMA

In operation Just Cause the United States would once again employ the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne as a part of a joint operation to take down Manuel Noriega and his Panama Defense Force. Of particular note for this operation was the fact that Manuel Noriega was actively involved in drug trafficking into the United States, a violation of US law.

President Bush outlined three reasons for the invasion that are stated below,

**Safeguarding the lives of U.S. citizens in Panama.** In his statement, President George H. Bush claimed that Noriega had declared that a state of war existed between the United States and Panama and that he also threatened the lives of the approximately 35,000 Americans living there. There had been numerous clashes between U.S. and Panamanian forces; one American soldier had been killed a few days earlier and several incidents of harassment of Americans had taken place.

**Defending democracy and human rights in Panama.** Earlier that year the government insisted that they won the presidential election that in theory was won by U.S.-backed candidates from opposition parties.

**Combating drug trafficking.** Panama had become a center for drug money laundering and a transit point for drug trafficking to the United States and Europe. Noriega had been singled out for direct involvement in these drug trafficking operations; although, the U.S. had turned a blind-eye to Noriega's involvement since the 1970s.

**Protecting the integrity of the Torrijos-Carter Treaties.** Members of Congress and others in the U.S. political establishment claimed that Noriega threatened the neutrality of the Panama Canal and that the United States had the right under the treaties to intervene militarily to protect the canal.<sup>25</sup>

The 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division made its first successful combat jump since World War II onto Torrijos International Airport, Panama. Within 18 hours the Division was prepared and ready to support the strategic aims of the United States of America. "The 82d Airborne Division and the 75<sup>th</sup> Ranger Regiment, because of their unique capability for forced entry by parachute were added to the troop list for Panama"<sup>26</sup>

The 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne as a part of their training ethos were prepared for this or any operation. The following excerpt explains the notification and mission for the 82<sup>nd</sup> for Operation Just Cause,

**The XVIII Airborne Corps gave the 82d Airborne Division G-3, Lt. Col. Dan McNeill, a no-notice order to execute Corps Operation Plan 2-90. This order initiated the division's eighteen-hour planning and alert procedure, a routine through which the division units had moved many times in the past.<sup>27</sup>**

The 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Divisions mission was the following,

**At 1100, Joint Task Force South (the XVIII Airborne Corps in Panama) notified the 82d to execute Joint Task Force South's Operation Plan90-2, with D-day/H-hour as 20 Dec 890100. The three specific objectives in the plan for the 82d were the UESAT/Cav Squadron at Panama Viejo; the 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry Company at Tinajita; and Battalion 2000 at Fort Cimarron. In addition, after successfully "taking down" these objectives, the 82<sup>nd</sup> was to move into Panama City and to neutralize the Dignity Battalions.<sup>28</sup>**

The 82<sup>nd</sup> was successful in securing there objectives and was a successful part of a Joint Task Force which included, Marines, Airmen, and Sailors.

## OPERATION UPHOLD DEMOCRACY HAITI

The strategic importance and reputation of the division was clearly marked in the initial negotiations during Operation Restore Democracy. On September 16, 1994, the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division was alerted as part of military operations in Haiti. The 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division was scheduled to make combat parachute jumps into two locations in Haiti, Pegasus Drop Zone and Papia Airport, in order to help oust the military led dictatorship of Raoul Cedras, and then to restore the democratically elected president, Jean Bertrand Aristide.

As former U.S. President Jimmy Carter and former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Colin Powell were negotiating with Cedras to restore Aristide to power, the 82<sup>nd</sup> first wave was in the air, with a number of paratroopers waiting at Green Ramp to air land into Haiti once the airfields there had been seized.

President Jimmy Carter and Colin Powell articulated the fact that U.S. Army Paratroopers were prepared to deploy to Haiti to restore democracy to Haiti. The Haitian military dictator verified from sources outside of Pope Air Force Base that the 82<sup>nd</sup> was on the way to invade, Cedras capitulated and stepped down from power and averted the invasion. "Clinton said the accord came only after 61 planes with Army 82nd Airborne paratroopers had been airborne to begin an invasion to restore democracy to the Caribbean nation. The troops were recalled to Fort Bragg, N.C." <sup>29</sup> Operation Uphold Democracy was a clear demonstration of the strategic importance the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division holds as one of the premiere contingency forces in the United States Military. For the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne and the United States this demonstration of strategic reach was instrumental in displaying all U.S. military capabilities for use in diplomacy. The alert

sequence and organization of the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne for contingency operations needs to be examined to fully appreciate the units force package that is on alert to respond to future contingencies.

## 82<sup>nd</sup> AIRBORNE READINESS REGIMENT

As to combat readiness, a company strength package of manpower and equipment known as IRC or Initial Ready Company is on 24 hour alert ready to board the transports any time of the day. Following the IRC the division is able to deploy DRF I or Division Ready Force 1 which consists of three infantry companies, a combat support company, headquarters company, and artillery company, an engineer platoon, a water supply squad, a bulldozer squad, and Military Police squad, and helicopter crew. For a larger operation the DRB or Division Ready Brigade will take over the job. The DRB consists of three infantry battalions, antitank company, an engineering company, an artillery battalion, an airmobile platoon, and intelligence detachment, paramedics, supplies, and maintenance crew and Forward Air Controllers.

The time required for deployment is within 18 hours for DRB level, that is, the first DRB to take off followed immediately by additional DRB strength. One reinforced airborne infantry brigade of approximately 3,000 men is prepared at all times for immediate deployment and into the objective as witnessed in Operation Urgent Fury and Operation Just Cause.

### **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION:**

The war in Iraq and Afghanistan is hindering the strategic capabilities of the militaries contingency forces. The purpose of this paper was not to paint the picture that contingency operations and planning will fail without the employment of the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division. The paper was written to illustrate that a 15 month deployment of the entire division simultaneously truly takes away a strategic capability that the United States possesses in her arsenal.

The War on Terror is currently getting resourced at astronomical levels. The heavy toll on all the forces involved has been truly significant as noted by the current Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Admiral Mullen earlier in this paper. If the people of the United States are to take the National Security Strategy seriously, then there are some grave concerns that need to be addressed. With the illicit activities of rogue regimes and the threat they pose to the US and her allies, a constant state of readiness is required. Iran, Syria, DPRK, Islamic extremist are just a few of the threats that are facing this nation. Events in Africa and the illicit activities in South America are very serious concerns for the U.S. as well. Russia and China are patiently watching as the United States continues to stretch itself thin with operations in the Middle East.

With the plethora of threats that face the U.S. while it is engaged in a war that is going into its 5<sup>th</sup> year demonstrates that the U.S. must be prepared now more than ever to counter these threats.

The leaders of the U.S. must continue to grow the military so it can maintain its contingency forces and develop contingency plans while simultaneously training conventional forces to prepare for enduring conventional requirements as well as counter

insurgency operations. This will take time and a proper defense budget to support the growth of force structure and training required for such a task. If the National Security and Defense Strategy are to truly have teeth, then the leaders of the United States must come together to address the vital need to have and maintain a larger military force to counter the large number of geo-political threats that currently exist. The 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division has proven throughout history that it is a vital strategic contingency force that will help preserve democracy around the world.

“An airborne force with a rapid build-up capability which permits a concentrated employment of force in turn lending itself to tactical surprise. The strategic reach of the airborne force is matched by no other type forces. A capability to fight as infantry or an airmobile force is matched by no other type forces. A capability to fight as infantry or an airmobile force once on the ground provides additional dimensions to the airborne capability. The airborne has a tradition of being an elite fighting force with a special expertise not available in other type forces. God bless the All Americans!!!!!!!!!!!!” LTG Harry W.O. Kinard

Attachment A: 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division Deployment History

**2001 TO PRESENT DEPLOYMENT HISTORY OF THE 82ND**

82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division operations and requirements since 911: After the September 11, 2001 attacks on the United States, the 82nds 49<sup>th</sup> Public Affairs Detachment deployed to Afghanistan in October 2001 along with several individual 82<sup>nd</sup> Soldiers who deployed to the Central Command Area of Responsibility to support combat operations.

In June 2002, elements of the Division Headquarters and 3<sup>rd</sup> Brigade deployed to Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. In January, 2003 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade relieved 3<sup>rd</sup> Brigade, and continued the Division's support of Operation Enduring Freedom. During 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade's tour in Afghanistan, 70 Soldiers from B Company, 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion, 504<sup>th</sup> Parachute Infantry Regiment, in conjunction with A Company, 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, 75<sup>th</sup> Ranger Regiment, conducted a combat jump into western Afghanistan. This was the first combat jump for the division since the United States invasion of Panama in 1989, but was uncelebrated as it remained classified for over a year.

Operation Iraqi Freedom: The 2<sup>nd</sup> brigade of the Division took part in Operation Iraqi Freedom in early 2003. The brigade returned to the US by mid-February, 2004. The 3<sup>rd</sup> brigade of the division deployed to Iraq in the summer of 2003, redeploying to the US in Spring, 2004. The 1<sup>st</sup> brigade deployed in Iraq in January, 2004. The last units of the division left Iraq by the end of April, 2004. The 2<sup>nd</sup> brigade returned to Iraq in mid December 2004, and returned again on Easter 2005. During the initial deployment thirty six soldiers from the division were killed and about 400 were wounded, out of about 12,000 deployed in total. On July 21<sup>st</sup>, 2006, the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 325<sup>th</sup> Airborne Infantry Regiment along with a platoon from A Battery 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, 319<sup>th</sup> Airborne Field Artillery Regiment and a troop from 1<sup>st</sup> Squadron, 73<sup>rd</sup> Cavalry Regiment deployed to Tikrit, Iraq & returned in December of 2006. Just days after returning home, the battalion was called up to join the rest of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Brigade in another deployment scheduled for the beginning of January 2007. On January 4<sup>th</sup>, 2007 2<sup>nd</sup> BCT deployed once again to Iraq in support of OIF. The brigade was the first to be sent as part of the troop surge in Baghdad. Since the deployment began, the Division has lost 37 paratroopers. Since September 11, 2001, the division has lost 20 paratroopers in Afghanistan & 101 paratroopers in Iraq, but the death toll for the division is still growing. The tentative return date for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Brigade is set for April 2008; however, the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion of the 2<sup>nd</sup> BCT is scheduled to return home sooner in November 2007.

## End Notes

<sup>1</sup> Admiral Michael Mullens Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Congressional testimony, February 2008, Fiscal 2009 budget.

<sup>2</sup> National Security Strategy of the United States of America, March 2006, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/nss/2006/>, (accessed February 18, 2008)

<sup>3</sup> National Security Strategy, p 1

<sup>4</sup> National Security Strategy, p.3

<sup>5</sup> National Security Strategy, p.15

<sup>6</sup> National Security Strategy, p.16

<sup>7</sup> National Security Strategy, p.18

<sup>8</sup> National Defense Strategy of the United States of America, March 2005, <http://www.maxwell.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/nds/nds.pdf>, (accessed February 19, 2008)

<sup>9</sup> National Defense Strategy, p.17

<sup>10</sup> National Defense Strategy, p.21

<sup>11</sup> Joint Publication 3-0, Joint Operations (17 September 2006), p.55

<sup>12</sup> Joint Publication 3-0, p.223

<sup>13</sup> Joint Publication 3-0, p.123

<sup>14</sup> Joint Publication 3-0, p.123

<sup>15</sup> Thompson, Leroy, "The All Americans; The 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne"(Great Britain: David & Charles Publishers, 1988), 87

<sup>16</sup> Mrozek, Steven J, "The 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division"(Dallas, Texas: Taylor Publishing Company INC, 1987), 17

<sup>17</sup> Mrozek, p.24

<sup>18</sup> Mrozek, p.33

<sup>19</sup> Mrozek, p.35

<sup>20</sup> Mrozek, p.44

<sup>21</sup> Uruquart, R.E. Major General, "Arnhem"(New York: W.W Norton & Company INC, 1958), 71

<sup>22</sup> Mrozek, p.76

<sup>23</sup> Mrozek, p.78

<sup>24</sup> Thompson, p.124

<sup>25</sup> Flanagan, Edward M. Jr., "Battle for Panama: Inside Operation Just Cause."(Washington New York London: Brassey's (US), Inc, 1993), 16

<sup>26</sup> Flanagan, p.48

<sup>27</sup> Flanagan, p.58

<sup>28</sup> Flanagan, p.60

<sup>29</sup> Staff and Wire reports, "The Haiti Crisis: With warplanes on the way, invasion averted Cedras relents after learning that operation had been launched," The Virginia Pilot(September 1994), <http://scholar.lib.vt.edu/VA-news/VA-Pilot/issues/1994/yp940919/09190072.htm>, 1994 (accessed March 28, 2008).

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